UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/AC.51/1997/L.4/Add.25
2 July 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND COORDINATION
Thirty-seventh session
9 June-3 July 1997
Agenda item 8

DRAFT REPORT

Rapporteur: Mrs. Sharon BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas)

Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999 (item 4 (a))

Section 23. Protection of and assistance to refugees

1. At its 18th meeting, on 23 June 1997, the Committee considered section 23, Protection of and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

Discussion

2. Several delegations expressed support and appreciation for the important work carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in addressing the problems of refugees as well as the other activities it undertakes, together with other United Nations agencies, in the event of humanitarian emergencies. Some delegations expressed support in particular for UNHCR activities to promote and elaborate comprehensive regional solutions and for the training programmes for national authorities and operational partners in the field.

3. Several delegations expressed support for activities addressing the specific needs of women and children. It was also stated that assistance to internally displaced persons should be provided by other agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to enable UNHCR to use its resources in the areas that fall directly under its mandate.

4. Some delegations commended the enhancement of efficiency through Project Delphi, strongly endorsed the signing of the memorandum of understanding with other United Nations agencies as a means of reducing cost and avoiding duplication, and noted with appreciation the striking reforms being undertaken. Other delegations expressed concern about the proposed staff reductions.

5. Some delegations noted that, in subprogramme 2, assistance to receiving countries was not mentioned. The Secretariat explained that UNHCR always ensured that its assistance benefited local residents as well as refugees.

6. Some delegations requested clarification on how UNHCR intended to deal with any exodus of the population resulting from conflicts. Clarification was also sought on a similar point regarding refugees who had become a destabilizing force; one delegation suggested that assistance to those refugees be discontinued. The Secretariat explained that UNHCR acted in accordance with its mandate, the provisions of pertinent conventions and any additional legislative mandates adopted by the General Assembly.

7. One delegation expressed serious concern about the lack of transparency in announcing training events for government officials and non-governmental partners on refugee law as well as on technical cooperation. The Secretariat indicated that information was disseminated through UNHCR field offices as well as at its Geneva headquarters. The same delegation stated that not all UNHCR field offices disseminated such information. Therefore, it was necessary that such information be disseminated well in advance and in a non-discriminatory manner so as to provide all Member States with the opportunity to take part in and benefit from those training programmes.

8. One delegation proposed the following modification to the narrative of the section:

In paragraph 23.11, in the second line, the words "by reintegration assistance" should be replaced by the words "and planned in both host country and country of origin, especially in the developing countries where the feasibility of repatriation is highly dependent on the existence of promising socio-economic infrastructures".

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly to approve the programme narrative of section 23, Protection of and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, subject to further consideration as stated in paragraph 35 of the introduction, with the following modifications:

(a) In paragraph 23.3 (a), in the fourth line, the word "movements" should be replaced by the word "displacement" and the word "comprehensive" should be inserted before the word "solutions";

(b) In paragraph 23.3, a new subparagraph (d) should be added to read: "To provide humanitarian assistance for the care and maintenance of refugees in

an appropriate manner, on the basis of the principle of international burden sharing and solidarity; due attention shall be given to the prolonged presence of refugees, in particular in the developing countries" and the subsequent subparagraphs renumbered accordingly;

(c) In paragraph 23.7, the following sentence should be added at the end of the paragraph: "Decentralization as well as delegation of authority and distribution of resources, where applicable, to regional offices would lead to better performance and provide the flexibility needed";

(d) In paragraph 23.10 (c) (vi), in the fourth line, after the word "solutions", the following sentence should be added: "These solutions should be realistic and on the basis of specific situations";

(e) In paragraph 23.11, in the second line, the word "resettlement" should be inserted after the words "local settlement".